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Contributors

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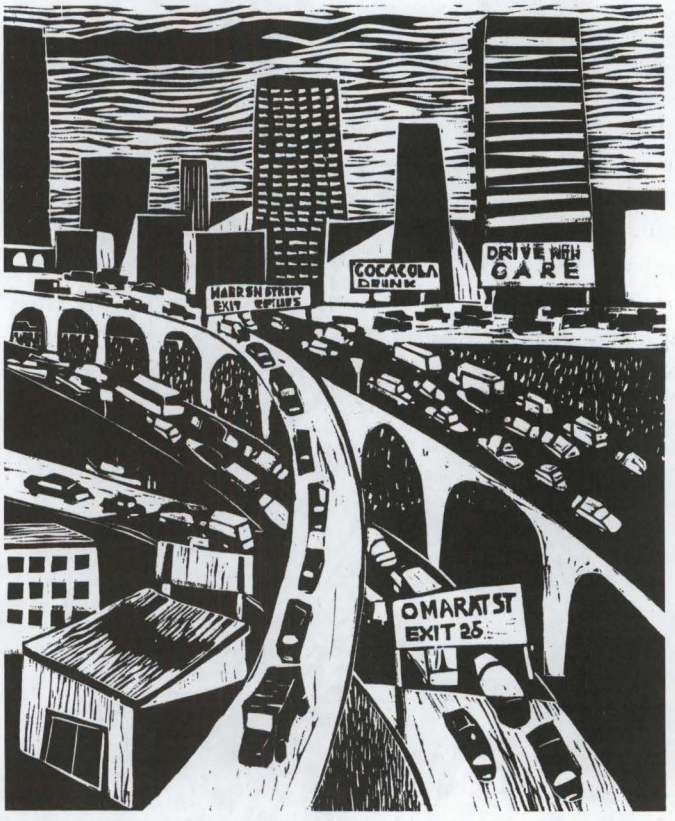

Above: *The Bottleneck, #2*
Cover: *Overpass, #9*
Back cover*: Backyards, #40*
These blockprints in black ink are 11 x 8 1/2 inches, and were created in 1967 by Chicago artist Bronislaw M. Bak as part of his portfolio entitled "One Hundred Views of the City - Chicago." The portfolio is a gift to VU Museum of Art by VU Law Professor Jack A. Hiller.

IN LUCE TUA

"Ollie, Olllie, Ottsinfree!"

The other night I saw an angel—wings, spectral music, thunderclaps and all. Of course it cost me forty bucks, not to mention the parking. But this is America, where even a vision has a price tag.

Maybe I shouldn't wake up to a clock radio. This morning, before I had opened my eyes, or rolled over, I had been sold some financial advice, a springtime cruise to Hawaii, a watch with a winding mechanism like a submarine hatch and a concert series featuring "Chicago's beloved *Messiah.*" (I had thought it was Handel's, but let it pass.) Before I had arrived at work, I was importuned to save National Public Radio with my support. Few things on today's cloudy political scene could be clearer than the insistent message that being one of the thousand points of light is gonna cost ya.

A recent issue of *Harper's* made the point that this is the era of *homo vendens*, selling man. Look at your own mail; every day brings evidence that our principal form of communication is the encouragement to buy. We can gauge the approach of the holiday season not, as in the nursery rhyme, because the "goose is getting fat," but because the weight of each day's delivery of catalogues approximates that of a very healthy Thanksgiving turkey. Not only can we acquire the goods themselves, the overstuffed cornucopia of goodies that mere money will provide, but we are encouraged to experience life itself—emotional and even spiritual life—by expending cash. Want to feel good? You can apparently buy that too, with your "support." We can write checks or even recite numbers into a phone, and thereby gather to ourselves good feelings, satisfaction, fulfillment, comfort, even joy. We can, we are promised, buy happiness and not make a payment till February.

But I digress. There will be time enough to read about the degradation of the thankful and holy seasons ahead. At this moment, I only want to wonder, as the waves of clamouring sales pitches mount ever higher, whether there is anything left outside the market?

Play, I think. Which sounds odd perhaps in a time when even playgrounds now operate on a "for profit" basis. And tickets to a "play" cost upwards of forty dollars. But reminders of play will let us consider where we are when we're not paying for something. Perhaps it will never be possible to become *homo ludens* again, but we could imagine it for awhile. That angel, for instance, was on stage in Tony Kushner's *Perestroika,* the second part of *Angels in America.* While we were at the play, our world—buying, selling, being sold, selling ourselves—was suspended. Instead, we in the audience were at play in the ideas, conversations, characters, events, sorrows, fights, kisses, tears and revelations of another world. There, we could be and do and hear and say what might seem impossible to us in the everyday reality of the world outside the theatre. There, where angels break through the bedroom ceiling and forgiveness comes even to the most egregious of sinners, we could bring into play the most amazing possibilities for life together. Perhaps separation and suspicion and despair are not the only games in town. Which brings me handily to this issue of *The Cresset.*

Playing with an idea, Gary Fincke has written a memoir balanced precisely on the paradox of the deathly seriousness of children's games, and children's prayers. And Elaine Moore, while reminding us of a commonplace about the borderless quality of children's play, embeds in the memory another truth about children's perceptions: their direct vision confronts the shocking horror of human experience with no mitigating distance. Neither philosophy nor theology shields Dana from the recognition of herself in the pictures of another young girl at Auschwitz.

The covers, from artist Bronislaw M. Bak, show the City, playing and working, but in forms rather inextricably mixed. Cars, buildings, signs, people seem to jump around as we look, unsettling our expectations of orderly grid or bureaucratic flow chart. Black and white, made of contrasts, the city spins and dances, and the back cover's obvious game is only slightly more explicit about the metaphor of movement that marks the city as the active contrast to a more static, if unseen, rural environment.

Michael Becker, from the VU College of Business, emerges from a Ph. D. program with his playful poetic imagination intact, we are happy to observe. His TQM haiku will delight us for that quality most worth keeping, our capacity to laugh. Ed Langerak, more often the serious philosopher, here gives advice both playful and insightful

in a consideration of academic sleeping. Maureen Jais-Mick's suggestions for liturgical observances of the holidays people are actually celebrating should continue to enhance her reputation in these pages as the musician most likely to surprise you.

Only in *The Cresset*, I think would you find the juxtaposition of two other pieces, Jennifer Voigt's retrospective look at *Bull Durham* and Fred Niedner's Advent sermon. Ms. Voigt's perceptive imagination plays out the implications of a game become work, in a genre where the work of thousands of people provides for our play. Even if you are one of those for whom baseball holds no charms (and the most enraptured fan would have to admit that this season's debacle was one of the most charmless spectacles of a charmless era), don't skip this article. I won't give away her points in this space, but the neat conjunction she constructs between work, play, spirit, and soul is a well-executed play in itself. Read at the same sitting with the Advent sermon, it could turn the most frivolous of us into a philosopher.

And the most serious among us—can we learn to play? Professor Niedner's sermon could, if the spirit moves, set us free to go tearing in like the veriest players of Hide and Seek. Here we have been for hours, playing out in the lengthening afternoon, crouched on the hidden side of our private griefs and our unshared fears, with our eyes tight shut, hearts thudding with an intense desire not to be discovered. Now, Advent-hounded again, we hear the voice that calls us to return—"Outs in Free!" Drawing a gulping deep breath and then going full tilt, we run for home.

Peace,

GME

Letters to the Editor are welcome, as are e-mail messages to geifrig@exodus.valpo.edu

HOME REMEDIES

Gary Fincke

A number of parents, once, believed they could cure whooping cough by thrusting their child through a blackberry bush three times.

As long as each thrust was exactly like the other two in velocity and distance. As long as they knew which direction was best, and the bush had arced over to thrust itself back into the earth like a living hoop.

Thousands of people, apparently, tried that method, thrusting three times and then listening to the awful thrust of air through the constricting hoop of the throat. How many of those practitioners of pow-wowing faced the graves of their uncured children? How many of them, lucky one time, were thankful for that particular tradition of folk medicine? Not at all likely why Harvey Walker was spared in second grade when he missed two months of school with whooping cough.

He had been absent for two weeks when I took my place in the new boy's seat, the last desk in the last row, a spare. Nobody said anything about Harvey Walker or the empty desk, third row, second seat, which, for all I knew, could have been the new girl's seat in case she joined the class. Not even the teacher mentioned his name until two weeks later, a few days before Christmas vacation, when we were instructed to make get well cards by the art teacher who visited each Friday.

I'd never seen Harvey Walker. I didn't know what kind of design would please him, but I tried lightning bolts and flaming arrows speeding through *Get Well Harvey.* I printed my name and then added "I'm new" so he wouldn't think a card meant for another Harvey had been mixed in with his.

Harvey Walker showing up on Groundhog Day. He was short and skinny and sat down as quietly as a new boy. By then Roy Kelman was out with scarlet fever. We didn't make cards for him. If he had stayed absent until Easter, maybe we would have sent him a batch, but the week before he came back, apparently unharmed, a boy who'd

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Gary Fincke, *a resident of Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania, teaches writing at Susquehanna University, where he also coaches the tennis team. A quick check in our files shows that he first published in* The Cresset *in 1982, and he has continued to be a favorite of our readers ever since. Mr. Fincke is the author of several volumes of poetry, among them* The Public Talk of Death *and* The Double Negatives of Living. *His essay on revisiting Kent State, "The Pagoda Sightlines," appeared in* The Cresset *in May of 1993.*

had polio the summer before hobbled back into first grade. "Robert Hutchings," somebody whispered to me, even though Mrs. Leggett wasn't in the room. "He was with us last year."

"Thank God for his favors," my mother said when I told her about the partial recovery of Robert Hutchings.

"Dear God, please make my eyes better again," I repeated every night after the Lord's Prayer, which wasn't special enough to make an impact on a specific handicap like nearsightedness. I ate a raw carrot every day with dinner, and by the end of second grade I'd had my seat moved up to the third row so I could see the blackboard. Now I sat right behind Harvey Walker, who, I thought, would fail second grade, because we passed our math and spelling test one seat behind us to be graded while Mrs. Leggett called out the answers. I marked twelve wrong out of twenty for Harvey's spelling; I marked seven wrong out of ten for Harvey's subtraction. He didn't know how to take a larger number away from a smaller number; he didn't know how to spell words like "table" and "purple."

After Roy Kelman returned, Mrs. Leggett asked me to listen to the two of them read from a book I'd finished the year before. I sat in the cloakroom and told them how to pronounce words, and thought I was curing them with my teacher's home remedy for failure. Robert Hutchings, the polio victim, lurched through the playground and hunched over his crutches beside the kickball field, but none of his former classmates ran over to talk to him.

Roy Kelman passes. Harvey Walker moved during the summer before third grade. Nobody knew if he had failed or not, and after two days of school, nobody said another word about Harvey Walker or whooping cough or the woes of subtraction. There had been, we understood, a great polio scare that summer, but everybody in the school was still walking except Robert Hutchings, who still wore braces and used the crutches and had been promoted to Mrs. Leggett's class.

A year later we were lining up for Salk's miracle shots, one cure that worked, but all through third grade I was miserable with carrots, prayer, and the failing to recognize classmates across the room. I didn't have faith, my mother said, or I would be able to see just fine. And she was right. I hadn't lasted a year on that home remedy, and during the day, outside of the house, I saw everything blurry and wished myopia on the rest of my class, because I knew I had a better chance of seeing that wish come true.

Of course, you could join the sick and the lame through accident. That winter, I took my best speedskater's stance at the high end of the playground, pushed off into a splayed-step spring through the snow, and hunched, turned side-ways, for the fifty- foot slide down the packed ice to where four catchers linked arms at the brink of the steep drop to the culvert and cyclone fence.

It was the foolproof safety system of the eight year old. None of us carried much bulk. Our legendary speeds weren't fast enought to draw our teachers outside to throw ashes on our slides. But when Billy Shaner was sufficiently silly to kneel and catch me below the knees, I upended in the great tradition of the banana peel and hit head first, unconscious, then conscious again, doing a slow slither down the incline in a poetic sprawl.

I was hoping Nancy Housel or Sharon Daniels was watching my heroic trek across the playground on the arms of two boys who promised they'd get that stupid jerk for me. Billy Shaner had already run for it. He'd got himself a head start into the cloak room, out of his coat and gloves, and into the doorway where Miss Hartung could see he was early for spelling.

I didn't explain that I shouldn't be moved or protest I was fine. I grinned stupidly at everyone, especially Nancy Housel, who was standing at the base of the stairs like a wife watching planes return from a bombing run.

I had a real goose egg, according to Miss Hartung. I should spend the rest of the day at home. What a life—four hours of comic books and board games while Billy Shaner suffered the fists of the third grade justice and the humiliation of being barred from the slide until the next thaw turned everyone away.

I returned the following day, giddy with a recovery accomplished through the folk medicine of a good night's sleep. And there were more home remedies my parents practiced: boric acid for anything that looked like an infection, baking soda for nausea, will power for nearly everything else. "You tell yourself to get better and you will," I heard. The great healer was faith, an all purpose antibiotic, and, as a last resort, my family believed in the laying on of hands.

Every afternoon, Monday through Friday, my

grandmother stopped her work to listen to Kathryn Kuhlman's performance broadcast from Pittsburgh. A self-proclaimed faith healer, Kathryn Kuhlman exhorted all sorts of crippled and diseased worshippers to come forward with their afflictions.

She laid her hands on deaf ears and mute tongues. She touched paralyzed limbs and encouraged movement. I don't remember whether or not she claimed universal success, but a fair number of these handicapped people professed to be healed, and her assistants guided them right up to the microphone which took their testimony to my grandmother's Philco.

You could hear the evidence when they answered questions, speaking for the first time in years; you could hear Kathryn Kuhlman say, "Drop those crutches and walk," and then listen for the great hallelujahs of success disappearing back up the aisle.

"Who would doubt such proof?" my grandmother asked. And so did my father and mother, for that matter, both of them believing that tumor could shrink from the power of Jesus, that Parkinson's Disease could be reversed by faith.

Christ, of course, healed by touch, but so did Vespasian, the Roman emperor during the first century A.D., who healed with his foot, we're told, putting his own spin on Christ's legend.

And then Henry VIII and his daughter Elizabeth, Clovis of France, Edward the Confessor, and Charles II, who drew such a large crowd for a touching ceremony in 1684 that a half dozen patients were trampled to death.

Those royal personages, people thought, could cure enough scrofula (tuberculosis of the lymph glands) that it was called the King's Evil. Samuel Johnson went to Queen Anne, and her touch changed nothing about his scrofula. Add one doubter, but for a long time there were many problems which could be cured by the laying on of hands of a corpse—warts and wens, sore throats—though the remedy for my crooked teeth was to press them with my living fingers while I was watching television or reading a book, some activity which left a hand free.

"Those two in the front," my mother said. "You just keep at it, and they'll be as good as new," an odd way of expressing it, I thought, since they'd arrived in the overbite position.

I was eleven years old by now, grown up enough to know skepticism. Braces were sparkling in a dozen mouths in sixth grade, but not mine. And my glasses were inside my desk in the first row so I could put them on to see the board when Mrs. Sowers had a quiz hidden behind the map of the United States which she scrolled up at 9:45, giving us exactly fifteen minutes to complete it.

Still, there were other prescriptions. Memorizing Bible verses to earn eternal life, reciting them on Children's Day to the applause of the congregation. Each verse was a rung on Jacob's Ladder, which had exactly one hundred rungs. And there, at the very top, was an open gate which glowed in the golden rays from the strangely blurry face of God. He looked, on my wall chart, as if he'd been drawn from the third row by an artist who carries his glasses in his pocket because he was too vain to wear them.

My motive wasn't vanity. I thought, because my father told me, that wearing my glasses would weaken my eyes more; that my vision would keep getting worse if I wore them; that, most important, I could never play baseball or football if I wore glasses.

He was right. Nobody on the Pirates wore glasses, although I had no way to confirm that except from listening to the radio, checking my Topps bubble gum cards, or squinting from the left field bleachers at Forbes Field toward the players so distant they could all have been wearing the Lone Ranger's mask without me knowing.

And so I played Little League the summer after sixth grade without wearing the new glasses I'd had to get because the old prescription had been superseded by the demands of my personal fog. One Monday, at twilight, the game in extra innings, I covered third base after a short passed ball, saw the catcher cock his arm and fling an invisible ball which resubstantiated ten feet from my left shoulder, which, in turn, twitched a couple of inches before it substituted for a glove.

"Are you blind?" the shortstop screamed, retrieving the ball while the happy base runner scored the winning run.

"No," I said, preferring the disgrace of an error to the irrevocability of a physical flaw.

A few minutes passed as we packed the bats and helmets and catching gear. By the time I picked up the last loose baseball behind the bench, I thought it was dark

enough to fling it sixty feet at any of my teammates and blacken one of their unblinking eyes.

"Hey!" I said, firing the scuffed ball at the shortstop, who was near the batter's box. He gloved the ball and dropped it into the bag.

"What?" he said. And then again, when I didn't answer: "What?"

And I could have told him another remedy for whooping cough: Look for a man riding a piebald horse. Ask him how the disease can be cured. He will know the infallible answer.

And hearing your child coughing so hard he vomits, the sound of those whoops intense enough to drive you desperate, you might grab the child and push him through the arced blackberry briar the rider suggests, middle man for healing, making certain you're facing the sun and believing in the restorative power of faith. ❑

Haiku of Total Quality Management*

White waves trade sand and stones
at shore edge, rise, recede, improve
continuously.

Rose, blue and emerald birds
squawk from the jungle canopy
a cross-functional funk.

Rose and lilac crystals
snare the force of stars and channel
to our process, system.

Crows peck at talon marks
on the grey mole carcass, envy
to the hawk's empowerment.

Tigers scratch out the new
gene code, exchange orange with black,
and reinvent themselves.

Lion's kill traded for
rancid meat of jackals reborn
quality consultants.

Michael Becker

*In the spirit of continuous improvement which is TQM, an improved haiku form having one additional syllable in each line has been developed.

EUTYCHUS, GODS, AND DOZING DOG-DAZE

Edward Langerak

One of my favorite bible-stories is that of Eutychus, the young man with the wonderful name—it means "good luck"—who, unfortunately, is mentioned in the Bible only because he did precisely what a number of college students do every semester—he dozed off during a lecture. He's the patron saint of academic sleepers. I will give his story and then discuss something distressingly practical for both students and teachers—the etiquette of snoozing in class. I dedicate this story to all those students who, during my twenty-one years of teaching, have managed to catch a few winks.

> On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight. There were many lamps in the upstairs room where we were meeting. Seated in a window was a young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep as Paul talked on and on. When he was sound asleep, he fell to the ground from the third story and was picked up dead. Paul went down, threw himself on the young man and put his arms around him. "Don't be alarmed," he said, "He's alive!" Then he went upstairs again and broke bread and ate. After talking until daylight, he left. The people took the young man home alive and were greatly comforted (Acts 20:7-12).

I remember the first time it happened—fall of 1972, my first semester of teaching; a crowded classroom on the third story of Holland Hall; eight o'clock class on Monday morning. I was giving this brilliant lecture on Kant's categorical imperative and a young man's head started nodding. But not in agreement. I was too green to be insulted—I was merely amazed. Six years of first-rate graduate school education had not given me a clue as to how to respond. What's worse, for the first and last time in my career, I had assigned seats, and young Eutychus had the front row. I thought I noticed other students placing bets on how low his head could sink before it snapped back up. I remember thinking, "Hey, this is unfair competition." So here's my first etiquette advice: If you are a nodder, sit in the back. At least you will avoid unfair trade practices.

Of course, you need not nod. If you just admit to yourself that you might not make it through this one, you can literally get a grip on yourself. I personally recommend the two-handed head grip: elbows on desk; hands

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Edward Langerak *teaches in the department of Philosophy at St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota. He has published book reviews in* The Cresset. *A previous version of this article was given as a chapel talk at St. Olaf College, on a day when the speaker is invited to talk about a favorite Bible story. He admits to being a morning person.*

surrounding the eyes; fingers on forehead; thumbs hooked around both cheek-bones. This way you can feign absorption in the text and still be fairly safe from sudden slips. Do remember to ask your neighbor to nudge you should you start to snore, which is also unfair competition.

However it occurs to some students—and rightly so—that it is more politic to feign absorption in the lecture itself, rather than the text. Why do you think professors assign texts that require clarification? Hence the temptation toward the one-handed chin hold: elbow on desk; one hand holding up the chin; other hand with pencil poised as if to string together the pearls of wisdom thrown your way. This has the advantage of more subtlety at first, but subtlety has a short half-life when you begin dozing. Invariably either the pencil or the head falls and all pretense is lost. And let's face it, in these situations pretense is the last refuge of dignity for everyone concerned.

Thus I cannot recommend the blunt honesty of simply putting your head down on the desk and getting your shut-eye undisturbed. I admit that sometimes when that happens the student walks out of class very refreshed. And then I feel greatly comforted because, not unlike St. Paul, I was an instrument for reviving a young person who looked dead. But sometimes blunt honesty is more annoying than refreshing and this is one of those times. Better simply to stay away—the prof is less likely to notice your physical absence than your rather more ostentatious mental departure.

But maybe there's a better alternative. For example, staying alert in class. "But how?" you ask. Here are a few modest proposals.

The obvious biblically-inspired one is to have drowsy students sit on the window ledge. I now teach on the fifth story of that same building. What a stimulating ingredient in a lecture! However, even Eutychus had the bad luck to fall. And since professors are, at best, St. Paul wannabees, this proposal could lower enrollment while raising insurance.

How about tattling to whoever is paying the tuition? Every year I have a few students who divide the number of class hours into the comprehensive fee and inform me how much a one-hour lecture costs them. This year it's $53. Some students even multiply that by the number of students enrolled and total class hours and then wonder out loud why I can't afford to dress better. My first response is to point out that their figures also show how extremely expensive are any naps they take in class; for $53 dollars an hour it would be cheaper to rent the presidential suite at a luxury hotel. At any rate, $53 for a snooze would certainly catch the attention of whoever is paying the bill. Actually, that figure is very misleading. Apart from the fact that it covers only 75 per cent of the actual cost of my students' education, it ignores the reality that students do lots of expensive things besides attending class—eating and sleeping for example. (Not everybody has yet achieved the efficiency of combining all these.) If one divides into the comprehensive fee the number of hours students are doing all these things on campus, the figure is more like $3 an hour. A bargain—considerably less than the hourly cost of sending them to prison, for example.

Of course, those paying the bill may be most interested in how their son or daughter spends the classroom hour. So let me return to that student in my early morning class during my first fall of teaching. That semester I was flattered to be invited to a dinner party with a number of rather senior faculty colleagues. During the dinner I was having fun telling about my sleeping student, complete with well-acted imitations. As I was blurting out his name it occurred to me that he had the same last name as two of those senior colleagues sitting at the table. No, it can't be, I thought. But, yes, it was—he was their son; and they said they would talk to him. As I was chewing on my foot, I resolved never to tattle again. Besides, the result was some apologies and embarrassment, but no less snoozing. It was an 8 o'clock class, after all.

Which suggests a third possibility: maybe it's all a matter of timing and conditions. For example, Scripture suggests that Paul may have gone past Eutychus' bedtime. Commentators are divided on why Luke included the curious line about the many lamps in the room. Some say it was to suggest that the brightness gave Eutychus no excuse. Others suggest that it was Luke's way of saying that the light of faith was burning brightly that night, and that while Paul was developing ideas that changed world history, giving a lecture where church historians and biblical scholars would die for a seat, Eutychus dozed off, blissfully ignorant of the earth-shaking importance of what was going on, much as Jesus' three favorite disciples slept through the most theologically intriguing event in the history of Christianity—Jesus' agonizing prayers in the Garden of Gesthemane.

However, I'm inclined toward a third school of thought—that the physician Luke was explaining the behavior of the unfortunate Eutychus by alluding to the soporific effects of high heat and low oxygen. Likewise, perhaps on campus the early morning hour—as well as the period right after lunch—are especially soporific. Maybe the class schedule should begin at 10:30 and also take a

siesta break after lunch.

Alas, if anything, colleges need more, rather than fewer, classes during those times, or else the cost of building more classrooms will make that $53 look cheap. In fact, last fall the curriculum committee at my college sent many students a questionnaire asking how early a class they would be willing to sign up for. I wrote on my questionnaire that the issue is not whether we are willing to sign up for an early class. It's not even whether we are willing to drag our bodies to an early class. Rather, it's whether we are willing, the night before, to put that body into bed early enough that it comes packaged the next morning with an alert mind. At any rate, early classes are likely to be necessary at any college we can afford.

Here's another possibility: maybe we should assign these "high-risk" time slots to the most exciting teachers, the ones who are so dynamic that it's impossible to fall asleep. Let the most charismatic faculty compete for the distinct honor and high privilege of being allowed to teach the first hour. Let the less exciting faculty be shamed by being restricted to the 10:30 time slot, when teachers are least likely to induce a doze.

Unfortunately, I fear this may not be sufficient. Under the right conditions, even the best teachers get their nods. In fact, Paul himself was no slouch; he may have been one of the best lecturers in Christendom. Look at a brief (edited) excerpt from a famous talk he gave in Athens, right in the very marketplace where Socrates, the patron saint of philosophy, kept his students awake by unrelentingly questioning them. Paul did not use this "Socratic method"—he leaned toward proclamation. But this excerpt demonstrates his excellent rhetorical technique.

> While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he reasoned in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there. A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to dispute with him. Some of them asked, "What is this babbler trying to say?" Others remarked, "He seems to be advocating foreign gods." Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus where they said to him, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we want to know what they mean." (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.)
>
> Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus [the local philosophy forum] and said: "People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and observed your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you. In him we live and move and have our being. As some of your own poets have said, We are his offspring.
>
> Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by man's design and skill. In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this by raising him from the dead."
>
> When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered but others said, "We want to hear you again on this subject" (Acts 17).

Nobody slept during this talk. Granted, half the listeners were jeering, but the rest were eager to argue again. Of course, Luke all but tells us that they were a bunch of philosophy majors, but that's not the only reason Paul kept their attention; Paul shows that he is a first-rate teacher. Notice just one important feature of his lecturing style—he builds on the previous understanding of his audience. He begins with their religious history and he quotes their poets, thus making a solid point of contact for his message. A recent publication, *Teaching Excellence*, distributed by the Teaching Learning Center at my college has an article subtitled "The Role of Prior Knowledge in Learning" (by Marilla Svinich). I quote its main piece of advice: "Use prior knowledge deliberately in the presentation of new information... One of the keys to learning...[is that] when new information gets hooked up with a particularly rich... portion of memory, it inherits all the connections that already exist." Paul's lecture is a model of this pedagogical virtue. By the time he associates their unknown god with their poets' points that "we are his children" and that "in him we move and have our being," Paul has a hook that is actually the firm foundation of a rich theism, a foundation

almost begging for what Paul proclaims as the cornerstone—the living Christ. So I submit that, when Paul lost Eutychus, it was probably not something that could have been fixed by improving the quality of his lecture.

"What is this pre-Gutenberg hang-up with lectures" you may say. "That's your problem. Why not take a clue from your other patron saint—Socrates—and rely on active class participation? That's how to prevent your students from emulating Eutychus." Point very well taken, though I've noticed that in a class of, say, 20 students, even if everyone takes turns talking, a given individual will have plenty of windows of opportunity for slumber. I recommend seeing the film, *Shadowlands.* Anthony Hopkins portrays C. S. Lewis as a master of the Socratic method. And yet even he manages to put one-third of his three tutees to sleep. Why? Well, as the plot thickens, it turns out that the young man was staying up all night. Now, I don't claim that this is the only cause of dozing off in class. Medical conditions, overheated rooms, bad timing, and, yes, even boredom, all play their role. But I'm convinced that the sheer biological need to catch up on winks is the major villain.

Which suggests my final modest proposal, one that is stunning in its simplicity and common sense. Why not have everyone get a regular night's sleep before breakfast? (And I mean faculty as well as students. When I occasionally stay up all night grading papers, it's amazing to me the next day how sleepy my students seem to be). But research reveals the astounding fact that some college students do not regularly go to bed by midnight! And perhaps 60 per cent don't even get up in time for breakfast.

In his book *The Denial of Death,* Ernest Becker notes that "dog" is "god" spelled backwards, and that the human race has always had trouble deciding which way to lean. Are we just a little lower than the angels, or are we more like dogs—perhaps somewhat more sophisticated but not for that reason any less beastly? The historical and contemporary evidence is decidedly mixed, as a glance at recent headlines will confirm. I suspect the answer is as much a matter of decision as of discovery, and that we tend to alternate between denying our animal nature and denying our divine image and mandate. We are God's offspring and it's true that in God we live and move and have our being, as the Greek poets said. But we are *embodied* imagers of God. And to live in a way that denies our physical needs for sleep or food is foolish—it's bad theology and even worse manners. If we try to live all night like the God of the Psalmist, who "slumbers not and never sleeps," then we will find ourselves during the day regressing to the life of dogs—taking little catnaps at the most embarrassing times.

And who knows what we might miss? We never hear again of Eutychus, but even if—perhaps especially if—he had the good fortune to later become a Christian, he must have wondered what he missed that night, as Paul was changing the world with his new ideas. Now, I don't claim that most professors' ideas—certainly not mine—are in the same class with St. Paul's. Still, you never know when you might learn something—or miss something—that could affect your life. And I don't claim that students should never stay up all night—opportunities and responsibilities can knock in unexpected ways; Paul himself, after he revived Eutychus, went back and talked until dawn. The bad theology and worse manners come when we *regularly* challenge our physical needs. Good theology and respectful sociability require that we recognize a simple but crucial truth: if we are in this together, we have to work on some rhythm in our common life, some pattern that allows us both our ungodly need to sleep as well as our undogly calling to reason together, to create art, and celebrate our gifts—together.

When my wife and I were field supervisors for a college term abroad a few years ago, we got to know quite well a number of fine students. But some of them too frequently stayed up too much of the night having, as they would tell us, "cross-cultural experiences" in the local "restaurants." We noticed that these tended to be the same students who too often fell asleep during, say, bus tours when local guides would provide a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to see and learn about such matters as how other cultures arrange their villages and farm their fields. As we alternated between trying to soothe the insulted guides and deciding whether to light a fire under the snoozing scholars, we reflected on this rich paradox of human nature: What a wonderful privilege it is to have the godlike ability to deliberately upset our animal-like rhythms in order to travel around the world and gain a global perspective, learning more about others and about ourselves. But how easy it is to use that same ability to ignore the biological need for those rhythms and then to pay the beastly price, forcing others sometimes to decide that the least bad option is to let sleeping dogs lie.

A better idea is to be realistic about balancing these different dimensions of our lives. Eutychus would wish us his own name for that. ❑

London, 1980

Time for another November; along
The railway track lie countries, anniversaries.
I stand in the park for a long while, watching
Where the indifferent fountain plays.

In windless air my breath hangs frozen,
Something inside me resembles pain,
As I continue to act my role
In a life-story still about father and son.

How he set out over seas on his search;
How he appeared and beckoned him up;
How he answered his word on the way;
How he begged to be spared the cup.

Wind on the beach and not a soul around;
Remember the belt, the bath-sponge, the coin?
How you suddenly cried out "Father—
Daddy," you cried at the jerk of the train.

Before my face go years in procession;
Pain is perpetual, as from a wound.
It is my birthday. Son without father,
Here in the park by the fountain I stand.

Eugene Dubnov

Translated from Russian by Anne Ridler with the author

Riddles and Strikes

Jennifer Voigt

This fall marks the first time in ninety years that there will not be a World Series. The players' strike has not only taken away a rite of fall for many Americans, Canadians, and others who love baseball, but it has spawned discussion about the conflict between labor and management and the perceived worth of one's work both within the pages of the country's newspapers, and in our homes, offices, and schoolrooms. The baseball strike, which, at this writing, has yet to be resolved, has commanded even the attention of the United States Congress itself. While it let legislation dealing with the likes of a national health care initiative die this September, the Congress began hearings investigating the game's protected monopoly status. In Ken Burns' documentary, *Baseball*, columnist George Will notes that baseball was one of the last American industries in which the labor won the right to negotiate with its management, after the demise of the reserve clause in the early 1970's. Will's comment is just one more plank in Burns' argument that baseball is America's game, somehow reflecting its soul, mirroring (and sometimes forcing its history), and defining its national character. Out of this conflict comes the idea that play is a job to be rewarded highly. The average baseball player, according to *Baseball*, makes fifty times the average American working person's salary. And management, of course, makes much much more. It is a manifestation of the truth uttered by Susan Sarandon's character Annie Savoy in the baseball film, *Bull Durham*. "Baseball may be a religion full of magic, cosmic truth, and the fundamental ontological riddles of our time, but it's also a job."

There are many movies about work. In the 80's we had *Working Girl*, where work promised money, liberation, class mobility, and power to any one who had ambition. In the 90's we have *Falling Down*, where the absence of work (the protagonist has just recently been laid off, and the cop who's after him faces retirement) means also the absence of economic freedom, class position, and power. There are even more movies about play. However, Ron Shelton's *Bull Durham* provides a clear picture of what happens when work is play. The primary concern of *Bull Durham* revolves not around the issues of money, power, or class, but centers on issues of the spirit. The work of baseball, the film leads us to believe, is satisfactory because its "joy...and poetry," as Annie puts it, "feeds the soul." Mind, body, and spirit come together in baseball, a job which allows workers to create art, profess faith, and engage in intellectual activity.

The film is about the Durham Bulls, a losing 1-A baseball team, and their biggest fan, Annie, who takes it upon herself to impart her life's wisdom to the Bulls' undisciplined pitcher, Ebby Calvin "Nuke" LaLouche (Tim Robbins). The idea is that when Nuke learns control, he'll play his best. Tension builds when the team hires Crash Davis (Kevin Costner), a very worn twelve-year veteran of the minor leagues, to impart *his* life's wisdom on the young pitcher, preparing him to ascend to the majors.

When they dream of the major leagues, or "The Show," as they call it, the players for the Durham Bulls speak of a sublimity they might find at bat only at a Fenway Park or a Wrigley Field. When Nuke brags about the material possessions his pitching arm has brought him, Crash responds with tales of his experience in the major leagues as being, "the twenty-one greatest days of my life." He recalls, "You know you never handle your luggage in The Show, somebody else carries your bags. You hit white balls for batting practice. Ballparks are like cathedrals." The ballplayers sense a higher purpose for their play, or Crash's soliloquy wouldn't tantalize them in a way that Nuke's Porsche

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Jennifer Voigt *has returned to school after a year of considering her options. A '93 graduate of VU, she is now attending the University of Colorado at Denver, and viewing films whenever possible. Her columns on film for* The Cresset *alternate with those of Fredrick Barton.*

does not. Being able to play at your work, they understand, has nothing to do with "personal fullfillment," or even survival. Through their work, the ball players strive for a wholeness of being. The life of a minor league ballplayer is not at all a stable one, but something about it sustains them. But, as the Bull's manager remarks, "It beats the hell out of working at Sears."

Crash watches Nuke disrespect the Game with the disgust of Salieri observing Mozart in *Amadeus.* It is a curse for the talentless lover of an art to be forced to watch a gifted monster doing God's work. Baseball is a hard art to practice, if only because of the disappointment inherent in it. Many are called but few are chosen to ascend to the realm of The Show, and as Crash laments one night, "only one more dying quail a game" makes the difference between baseball heaven and an eternity in A-ball Purgatory. He and Annie have spent their lives searching for the sublimity in baseball, sensing its presence, working to find it. Now his job is to create an artist. Crash's charge to Nuke to respect the game and his gift comes from his own regard of play. Play is not something to fool with, Crash knows; it is a thing out of which great things can be created. He also know s that to create great art on the ballfield takes more than talent. The artist must serve his gift, he teaches Nuke, and that takes work. Pleasure and satisfaction come not from the ends of work, but from the process of doing it.

Respect of the Game, Annie and Crash know, allows for the complete and satisfactory practice of its religion. *Bull Durham* comes right out and addresses faith, acknowledging it as a vital aspect of personal growth. One needs to work at faith, through art and deliberate play. In the film, one arrives at full understanding through the body, the mind, and the spirit. The Game is a metaphor for life, everything happens on the ball field: birth, death, sex, marriage. Superstition and fear frustrate work and distort play, making life difficult. The players who have faith will have peace with the Game, as a scene on the pitcher's mound directly preceding the final plot point demonstrates. The players meet in the middle of a difficult game, confused as to why play is hard that evening. As Crash explains to the team's assistant manager, "Nuke's scared 'cause his eyelids are jammed and his old man's here. We need to cut the head off a live rooster to take the curse off of Jose's glove, and nobody seems to know what to get Millie or Jimmy for their wedding present...We're dealing with a lot of stuff."

It is curious that the film takes as its central characters frustrated intellectuals like Annie and Crash. They both have brains and wisdom gleaned from experience, but the world, as Annie puts it, "is not made for people cursed with self-awareness." And neither, it seems, is the actual play of

Before Valparaiso University had designated a baseball team to compete with other universities, The above photo, taken in 1915, is of the College of Engineering team. The line art on the left a

baseball. *Bull Durham,* after all, is about growing older, both in wisdom and in years. Throughout, both Annie and Crash sense an absurdity about their situations. Why, they ask in subtle ways, are people like us playing games? Crash identifies himself as "the player to be named later," and later chastises Annie. "Who dresses you, " he asks. "Isn't this a little excessive for the Carolina League?" The combination of Nuke's talent and his lack of introspection convince them that baseball is a game best played by little boys. But the poetry and joy of play is wasted on the young. Nevertheless, the promise of their redemption comes in the intellectual study of baseball. Annie gives up boys, but finds solace in her theories, and Crash removes himself from the field, but looks to salvation in the dugout as a manager. Theory and management are jobs that allow for another kind of play, one in which the mind creates in place of the body.

Most of us only watch baseball, relegated to the stands we are much like Annie and Crash at the end of *Bull Durham,* participating through our imaginations and our intellect. Which makes baseball like film. In one of its nine segments of "innings," *Baseball* finds a connection between film and the national pastime. Ken Burns chronicles the story of the creation of the song, "Take Me Out To The Ballgame." Written by a vaudeville performer whose act it failed to enliven, the song gained popularity in the nickelodeons that populated the prehistory of the moving image. It is the only connection the documentary makes between its medium and itself, and it's not a self-conscious one. Film stays small—worth only a nickel—in *Baseball,* though Burns' filmaking is big. His style is so refined that for the first few hours *Baseball* could have been an earlier film of his, *The Civil War,* with players in ball uniforms taking the places of soldiers in blue or gray. For Burns, baseball, film, and history are paths toward introspection. With film, Burns combines the work of researching a history with the play of assembling it—the hours of drudgery in the archives and the imagination together reach the sublime for which *Bull Durham's* ballplayers played the game.

And so we can have a baseball strike in which we tolerate labor whose salaries are fifty times the average and management that controls one of the most lucrative industries in the country fighting over the value of work that is, essentially, play. In America we have a dream about work, that it should sustain, satisfy and please, and not only economically. That's why we can call our ballfields "fields of dreams." It is in our sports, our arts, that we find this satisfaction and pleasure. So we, like the Durham Bulls, envy those who can play and call it work. ❑

sport was enjoyed by several colleges within the University which competed with one another. ght comes from the 1923 yearbook.

MIKE, THE SWINGS, AND A BRONTOSAURUS

It was like being in a war–time movie that night—the sudden glare of flashlights and the angry muttering from three uniformed men in our doorway jolted us awake.

We had already faced inspectors like these several times on our train trip from Czechoslovakia to Poland. Each time my husband, Jim, had to decipher their commands and hand over the correct documentation. The gruff impatience if he produced the wrong form made us all very tense. Numerous papers were required for a family of four to travel across communist Europe in 1987 and independent travelers like us were treated with impatience and distrust. What did they want now?

For some unknown reason, this midnight visit concerned our son. They would not leave until we woke Mike, our four–year-old, and sat him up on my lap facing the officials so they could shine a light in his face and look at his passport. They searched every paper in our bags, including Jim's briefcase and the kids' toy bag full of children's books, coloring books and notebooks of scribbling.

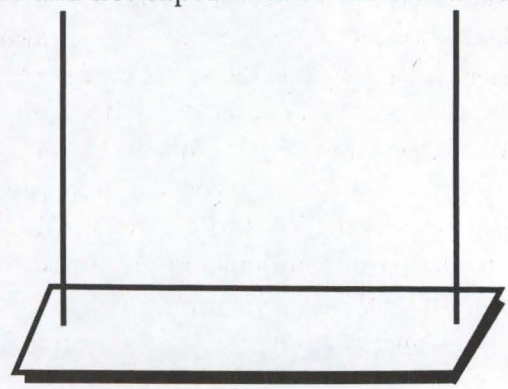
We thought this unexpected glimpse of bureaucratic tyranny would be the most eventful moment of our journey. We never expected the anxiety and fear, laughter and friendship we experienced on this trip to Auschwitz. Of all our memories, those involving our children had the most lasting impact.

Unfortunately, Mike again became the center of attention early the next morning after we arrived at our hotel in Katowice.This time trouble came when I thought Mike was being watched by our thirteen-year-old daughter, Dana, and she thought he was with me. We stood in the tiny lobby bewildered and dazed. Where could he be? Jim had just left the hotel on an errand and Mike was nowhere to be found. Was he on one of the elevators all alone? Had he slipped out the open front door while no one was looking? None of the staff at the hotel seemed to understand my flustered, floundering German. That helpless feeling of being unable to communicate across language barriers is one I never want to face again as a parent. Jim strolled back into the hotel a short time later with Mike in hand. Our go-go kid had followed his dad out the door. ❑

I thought that possibly our entire trip was a mistake the day we finally visited Auschwitz, the death camp which was perhaps the epitome of Nazi madness. Jim had come to say the Kaddish of remembrance, a gesture of reconciliation he could offer his Jewish friends.

This time it was our Dana who felt the pain and I don't think she will ever forget it.

We had decided that I would stay outside the camp with Mike and not expose him to the scenes we might find



Elaine M. Moore

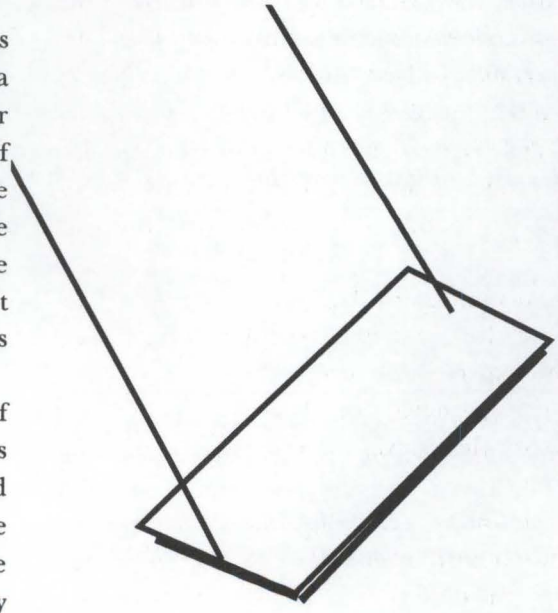
inside. So Jim was with Dana at the moment they entered one big empty room and glanced around. The opposite wall was entirely covered by a larger–than-life photograph of prison children, looking blankly through the barrier of a wire fence. One face at the barbed wire stood out shockingly clear to both of them because it was of a girl who looked almost exactly like Dana. Our daughter felt at that moment the reality of what had happened to a girl like her and it made her cry. Although we felt she was ready to face this tragic piece of history, nothing could prepare her for such a personal jolt. ❑

Mike's almost daily encounters with the local children forced us to look at the world through children's eyes.

On a three-week expedition with a four-year-old, it was important to remember his needs, so we never passed a playground without stopping (fortunately, they are all over Europe). Auschwitz is just outside the tiny town of Oswiecim, about 50 miles from the Russian border in the middle of nowhere. While walking back from the camp, we came to a small town park with swings, and waited for Mike to run off some energy there. Although it was a quiet afternoon with few people around, we felt very conspicuous while Mike chattered and played, but we were ignored.

Then the elementary school let out and a bunch of young children raced into the park. When the first ones saw us they stopped and stared. When the bunch heard Mike talking there was silence. Little Mike stood there asking them to come play with him and they stood there dumb-struck and mumbling among themselves. Clearly they were upset that these foreigners were using their swings. One older child near the front seemed to be challenging Mike, angry that he wouldn't answer in their language. He shouted a bit at Mike and Mike talked back and neither understood why the other didn't understand. A ticklish situation. Then, from the edge of the crowd, a little boy about Mike's age slipped off to the merry-go-round and motioned for Mike to jump on too. He did, they played, and no further words were needed.❑

On the train leaving Poland, we were trying to keep our offspring reasonably quiet and occupied as we faced a long, hot trip. At an early stop, our compartment became stuffed with women, bags and children. Everyone seemed upset by the overcrowding and we were looked upon silently and suspiciously. Fortunately, there was another small boy across from Mike, sitting on his mother's lap as well. When Mike took out his plastic dinosaurs from the toy bag, he was the focus of everyone's attention. Mike noticed the other boy watching and offered him a brontosaurus. The young mother was shy and hesitated but finally let her son take it. Later as they looked at one of Mike's animal books together, you could tell the other passengers were interested. When it was time to leave, we motioned for the little boy to keep the dinosaur in his hand. The mother smiled gratefully, then pulled out of her bag a Polish story book for Mike to keep. I hope the boy still has his brontosaurus and remembers the fun. Mike has forgetten much of the trip but he still talks about the boy who gave him a book. ❑



Elaine Moore *is a librarian at the VU School of Law. She is the wife of Professor James Moore of the VU Department of Theology. Though she claims not to be a writer, the evidence is against her.*

From the Chapel

HEAR THE GOOD NEWS: "REPENT!"

Frederick A. Niedner

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah, "The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'" (Luke 3:1-6)

See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight—indeed, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the LORD in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years. (Malachi 3:1-4)

Fred Niedner, *of the VU Department of Theology, preached this sermon in the Chapel of the Resurrection. Professor Niedner has written often for* The Cresset, *and also speaks and writes widely on Biblical topics, particularly in Jewish-Christian dialogue and matters of gender. His current project is a book on the hatreds in the Bible, and what Christians can do with them.*

In order to give Cresset *readers time to make this sermon part of their Advent preparations, we include it here, though we hope we will not be accused of starting the season too early. These are the readings for the lectionary of Advent 2, Cycle C.*

Because this university community always disbands temporarily just before Christmas, and we'd like to share some of that season's joy together, we inevitably join Marshall Field's and the K-Mart in jumping the gun on Christmas. We've put up our decorations and this afternoon we will have our Christmas concert. But we are really only a week into Advent, a season meant not so much as a time to prepare for Christmas as to take stock of the darkness of this world in the shorter and shorter, darker and darker days of December. It's a time not only to remember the arrival of the Bethlehem baby, but to prepare for the final coming of the one who will bring light and judgement, and who will at last set things right. It's a time to see,

even in this darkness, that he also comes now, here, in this place, today, in your room, and tonight, on your bed, and tomorrow, in your office, in your classroom.

We have heard voices in the darkness this morning saying, "Someone is coming!" First we heard the prophet Malachi, whose message sounds like a warning: "See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap." I don't know about you, but when I hear someone is coming with bleach and a blowtorch, my instinct is to get out of the way. But Malachi's message is good news of a welcome arrival, though you have to have read the rest of Malachi's short book to know that.

According to Malachi, the people of his day took advantage of the darkness of the world by bringing rotten grain and sick animals to the temple for their offerings. They thought no one would notice a little mildew or a case of pinkeye among the thousands of lambs and the heaps of grain which the multitudes brought as sacrifices. But evidently, what happened was like the legend of the king who requested each of his subjects to contribute a measure of fine wine to a huge vat which would be shared at a royal wedding. But each of his subjects thought that no one would notice a single measure of water mixed in with all that fine wine, and on the appointed day, the vat was tapped, and out came pure, clear water.

Malachi said God was irate about this situation, accusing even the priests and Levites of being bored with their service to God and sniffing their noses at God. "So," God said in Malachi's day, "I will smear dung on your faces and dung on your offerings, and I will put you out of my presence. That's what I think of you and your sick, rotten offerings!" (Malachi 2:4) You've heard of *eschatological* judgment? Malachi threatens *scatological* judgment.

Perhaps you have noticed, as I have, the strong odor of rot and sickness about us these days. Our own offerings to God are the things we do in our various places of vocation, the places God has called us to be his agents of grace, kindness, and blessing in this world. But in this dark and much too busy season we, too, fall prey to the temptation to pass off rotten offerings thinking no one will notice. I am a teacher whom God has provided for some of you, and sometimes these days you have gotten only scraps from me, bits and pieces salvaged from a too busy schedule. I am the father whom God has provided for my children, the husband God has given to my wife. But my fatherly care is tainted too often with impatience lately, and my wife must settle for leftovers at the end of my crazy days. I wonder if anyone has noticed.

And you, you are the students and the colleagues whom God has given to me. The offerings have been pouring in these last few days, and I must say that some of the papers I've been reading have a certain smell about them, the faint but telling odor of stuff which has been conceived and born and grown to ten pages all within a few hours in the middle of the night while you were in a semi-conscious state. You, too, are passing off leftovers and rotten stuff for your offerings. Perhaps you thought no one would notice. Goodness knows where the best of us gets spent, or who, if anybody, receives from us what we really, truly have to offer up as our gifts in this dark, troubled world. But God's threat as voiced in Malachi comes through loud and clear. "I will smear dung on your faces and dung on your offerings!" Yes, I've wondered if perhaps I've had a few whiffs of that, too, in these last few days.

But the good news according to Malachi is this, that God does not go through with the threat, does not come to heap dung on our already rotten, sick messes, but comes instead to purify and to refine. The bleach and the blowtorch are good news because though they burn and sting, when God is through with us we shall be clean, our offerings sweet- smelling and pure. And God will take a deep breath and smell the wondrous aroma of kindness, generosity, patience, gentleness, love, joy, and peace, and God will remember again why it was God made human beings on the earth. So, "Come!" we pray in Advent, "Come with your bleach and blowtorch. Cleanse and purify us. Make us and our offerings whole once more."

We hear another prophet's voice in the darkness today. John the Baptizer came, Luke says, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. We will not hear the content of John's harsh, sobering proclamation of repentance until next Sunday's gospel lesson, but Luke wants us to know that John's words, too, are more good news than bad, harsh as they are. The clue is in the poem Luke took from Isaiah 40 and quoted as descriptive of John's work and message:

Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.
Every valley shall be filled,
and every mountain and hill shall be made low,
and the crooked shall be made straight,
and the rough ways made smooth;
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

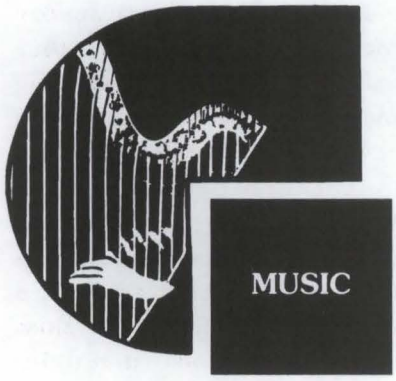
That ancient Isaiah text is a Homecoming Poem, a promise of what would happen when the Israelite exiles in Babylon would finally have the chance to go home. When Israel returned through the wilderness to their homeland, then the whole world could see the salvation of God. Therein lies the clue to the meaning of repentance. "Repent!" means "Turn around!" "Repent!" means "Come home!" That's what John was crying in the wilderness. "COME HOME!" Come home all you out there with dung on your faces and stinking, rotten offerings slung over your shoulders! Come home all you with sick and crippled sacrifices! You with your smelly, half-baked lectures; you with so much love to give and yet you nurture your family members and friends with garbage and crumbs from the floor of your life, come home! You who have trashed your life so badly it's not worth much to anybody right now—COME HOME!

Come home to this community where the only thing that really counts is that we are all baptized, we are family, we are God's beloved children, despite everything and no matter what else is true. Here there is cleansing. Here there is forgiveness. We have the bleach and the blowtorch here, though we call them baptism and absolution. So please come home. The voice which calls us home is the only one we can really trust out here in the darkness as 1994 draws to a close.

And when you and I do come home, and then leave once again cleansed and refreshed, we go out into the world with new and sweet-smelling offerings. That is how the one who came long ago in the Bethlehem stable, the one who will come again to judge the living and the dead, comes into the world in the here and now. He comes in the only body he has right now, as the flesh and blood of the Body of Christ, which is you.

So here we are in the darkness. We are praying our Advent prayer, "Come, Lord Jesus!" And from somewhere out there in the darkness we hear the response through the words of the prophet, "Come home!" We're trying to find each other, we and the one who calls out for our return, and one day we surely will.

I read the perfect Advent invitation recently in a brief letter which is part of a collection of children's letters to God. A seven-year old girl wrote, "Dear God, I worry about you since you must not have a family the way we do. You must get real alonelee. How about sharing my family? They argue a lot but they are good to have mostly. With Love, Ann Marie." That's us, isn't it? We argue a lot, but we are good to have, mostly. And God does come to make a home with us and be family with us. Here our love and our capacity for forgiving is bigger and stronger than all of our sins and arguments put together. And here we come together to eat the bread and drink the cup which bear the life of our Lord Jesus, who came, who comes, and will come again. Let us then eat and drink, and be on our way once more out into the darkness, where we, too, will call out, "Come home!" ❑



The Mother of All Liturgies

Maureen Jais-Mick

Among church musicians and liturgists, there is an ongoing debate about popular culture and its influence on worship. One side views it as as threat to the liturgy, the other as a sign to folks, especially the unchurched, that we'll meet them where they're at. Some believe that liturgy should be "pure," free from outside influences. In this mode, we celebrate only the liturgical year and try to keep it untouched by our own time and fads—somewhat like those Protestant reformers, contemporaries of Luther, who allowed only the singing of metrical psalms in worship. They remained true to the Bible but, unfortunately, excluded mention of Jesus Christ or their own concerns, from their hymnody. *(Old joke: Q. Do you know the difference between a terrorist and a liturgist? A. You can reason with a terrorist.)*

The other side believes that any and all secular events should be celebrated within worship because they are part of life and make people—especially the unchurched— feel welcome in church. In this mode, we include prayers for local sports teams, sing Christmas carols as soon as the mall gets it decorations up, and emphasize the secular aspects of holydays—Easter, Valentine's Day, St. Patrick's Day, Halloween, etc. These folks often prefer the eight am Easter egg hunt to the midnight Easter Vigil.

Often, I think, parishes confuse the issue by taking unto themselves the aspects of celebration that people can do on their own. Folks don't need the church to celebrate Christmas with exchanges of gifts or elaborately decorated trees. The Church has the mystery of the Incarnation to celebrate. Families, shopping malls, and gift catalogs aren't going to usurp that responsibility any time soon.

Liturgy is never separate from the people who celebrate it, nor is it just a fun event. Years ago at my church, there was an Estonian congregation that gathered for worship three times each year. We used to joke that they only met for the major feasts—Christmas, Easter, and Mother's Day. More recently, as I've volunteered with single parent (almost always mothers) homeless families, and read about Bosnia, where young women impregnated by the enemy are
kept captive until abortion is impossible, the Cairo conference on world population, tiny heroin addicts born to substance abusing mothers, and domestic violence, Mother's Day has taken on a new significance for me. Now it seems as important a commemoration as any of the saints on the liturgical calendar.

When we observe a saint's day we recollect someone who has died—often in the distant past. John the Baptist, for example, is a much more respectable figure now that there's no one living who remembers the stench of his animal skin clothing, his disinterest in personal hygiene, and his outrageous pronouncements in public. But mothers are a continuum—an ongoing observance. When I was a child at Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church in Lombard, Illinois, Mother's Day was inevitably marked by recognition of the women in the parish who had birthed the most children. We

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never got beyond biology and sentimentality.

As Gertrud Mueller Nelson has observed, "Sentimentality is the emotion we feel when we scoop off a part of the truth, that part which we are willing to accept, and slather it like syrup to cover what we do not want to see" (77). I persist in expecting the Church to be anti-social. Worship is not a birthday party, football game, or parade. Motherhood is more significant than corsages, anecdotes, or cute songs. So, how might we celebrate Mother's Day 1995? Here are some thoughts.

Intermingling the images of Mother Church, Mother Earth and Mother Nature with the attributes of human motherliness would be a fine banner or bulletin cover design. (For some congregations, the figure of Mother Africa can be added to this mix.) May is a good month for motherhood; its commemorations include Monica, Mother of Augustine (May 4), and the Feast of the Visitation (May 31). Monica was no slouch in the mother department, and I suspect most Protestant congregations have not been properly introduced to this faithful African matriarch:

> In Africa's northern coastland
> When Mother Church was young,
> Was born the holy woman
> Of whom this hymn is sung.
> O Monica, beloved
> Before God thee we own,
> Our constant intercessor
> Before His heav'nly throne.
> Exemplar for all mothers,
> And patron saint of wives,
> She led her spouse and children
> In holy, Christian lives.
> Affection, patience, wisdom,
> True zeal and constancy:
> With these gifts God endowed her
> And holy Charity. (Lewis)

Elizabeth and Mary's encounter is the stuff of legend, crowned with the great *Magnificat.* Don't neglect its predecessor, the canticle of Hannah, often called the *Old Testament Magnificat* (I Samuel 2). On May 12, Episcopalians commemorate the mystic Dame Julian of Norwich. Alas, in our three year lectionary, the selected scriptures (selected by whom? one asks) place so much emphasis on the activities of men that ordinary folks must inevitably believe that women were (and are) peripheral to religion.

Liturgical celebrations are inclusive—worship is not a niche market. We have within our congregations women who are models of motherliness; some of them are childless. We don't know who is suffering because of the death of a child or the inability to have children. Some birth mothers have given children up for adoption. Others have lost custody of a child or are estranged from their children. Some have children who exist in the shadowy worlds of addiction, schizophrenia, and mental illness. Motherhood is so much more than fuzzy kittens on a greeting card.

Consider mothers around the world—those whose children are dying in their arms and the mothers of developing countries who generate their nations' economies through entrepreneurship and agriculture. Consider the mothers of our cities. In Washington, D.C., we have too many young, uneducated, homeless, drug addicted mothers. Mother's Day is a day to reaffirm your congregation's commitment to family values and a strong hook upon which to hang an ongoing project benefitting mothers and their children. As Mother Church would say, "Celebrating the Eucharist is not the end of the meal. Who should we feed next?"

Consider a "maternal" approach to the pericopes. On Mother's Day 1995 the first lesson will be Acts 13:44-52 and the second Revelation 21:1-15. They offer contrasting female characters and imagery—in Acts the devout Jewish women of high standing use their influence to persecute Paul and Barnabas, while in Revelation the new Jerusalem comes down out of heaven from God, "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." The Gospel (John 13:31-35) concentrates on love—viewed in many cultures, including ours, as a feminine attribute.

Women preachers, celebrants, and worship leaders are so common in my life that their participation on Mother's Day isn't much of a personal issue. If this is not true of your situation, then by all means have women lead your congregation in worship. (This article is not a forum about women remaining silent in church, but I am curious about latter day Pauline disciples who cling to this pronouncement. I try to imagine them in a romantic moment: "Well, Helen, I've decided it's better to marry than to burn. So, will you marry me?")

Mother's Day is an opportunity to expand the language of worship. God is both feminine and masculine, Mother and Father—hardly a radical stretch for the Supreme Being. The day's psalm—145—is beautifully rendered by Marchiene Vroon Rienstra: ". . . You are gracious and compassionate, O God. You are slow to anger and quick to love. You are good to all, and Your womb-love enfolds the world. All Your works praise You, El Shaddai . . ." One year our vicar was a female seminarian who believed that she was made in the image of God. Therefore, God was female and was always referred to as such. Within a few weeks, this picture of God became commonplace and parish members, young and old, could be heard referring to God as both male and female. The gender of God became a non-issue for the congregation.

For hymnody, we can turn to *Singing the Living Tradition,* the hymnal of The Unitarian Universalist Association, a faith tradition that has always taken literally God as Supreme

Being and therefore not limited God's attributes. Two texts by Brian Wren come to mind: "Strong mother God, working night and day, planning all the wonders of creation, setting each equation, genius at play: hail and hosanna, strong mother God!" and "Name unnamed, hidden and shown, knowing and known. Gloria! Midwife of Changes, skillfully guiding, drawing us out through the shock of the new, Woman of Wisdom, deeply perceiving, never deceiving, freeing and leading in all that we do."

Prefer something less modern? The House of God, Which Is the Church of the Living God, the Pillar and Ground of the Truth, Without Controversy, founded by Mary L. Tate in 1903, published *Spiritual Songs and Hymns*—unique in that it includes hymns about mothers. According to the musicologist Jon Michael Spencer, "No hymnal of a patriarchal denomination so affirms the mothering aspect of womanhood" (12).

The prayers of the people are always a wonderful opportunity to draw together the themes of the day and the concerns of a particular community. How any parish can be satisfied with generic prayer inserts is a mystery to me. Include all mothers (expecting, foster, adoptive, unwed, birth, stepmothers, those who have mothered us) in the prayers of the community. Be brave and remember those who have made the difficult decision of abortion. Be aware that in some families men are both mothers and fathers. Mothering is not gender specific in our society.

It's a tribute to liturgy and parish community when members want their lives marked with observances in the church. It's also hard work. Pastors, musicians, and worship planners have to take each event, look at it anew, and trash the fluff. As Gertrud Mueller Nelson writes in another context, "If Santa Claus is a God-the-Father figure for us, we will have to examine just what it is that we believe about God and what we know and believe about fatherhood" (77).

Some parishes aren't equal to this challenge. But it's been my joyful experience that concepts of real value are at home in the liturgy.

> Now thank we all our God
> With hearts and hands and voices,
> Who wonderous things has done,
> In whom this workd rejoices;
> Who, from our mothers' arms,
> Has blest us on our way
> With countless gifts of love,
> And still is ours today.
>
> (LBW)

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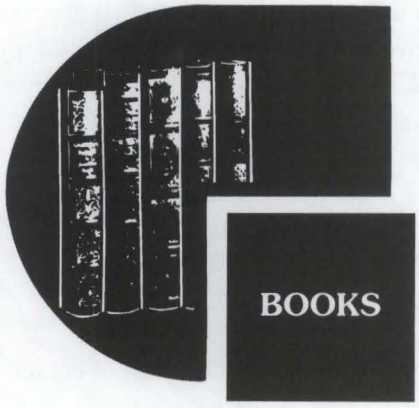
Wren, Brian. "Bring Many Names" copyright 1989 Hope Publishing Co.

—."Name Unnamed" copyright 1989 Hope Publishing Co.

Small Chalk

Too many, too difficult their names
on my clumsy American tongue. I stumble
over Rakseube, Bianzoumbe, Sidiki.
More familiar are their t-shirt logos:
Tuborg Beer, the Who, even Ralph Lauren,
his perfect forest green faded under
an African sun. Ninety two mouths, more
hungry for bread than the English I give
them, work silently over a paragraph
about Ted, the good student. They have
one pen each and they glance in sidelong amazement
at my things—a backpack, a bottle of clear
water, a plastic box filled with long sticks
of chalk. I am proud of numbers—the minutes
they spend reading, the three precious tenses
they have memorized. Correct use of the
simple past means they have acquired
something. They have little reason to learn
this language: their muscled backs will bend
in peanut fields, season after rainy season,
for another fifty years. They will die
in this village and be buried
in front of their mud houses,
no gravestones,
                so at the end of the hour
when they call, "Chalk, Miss, give us
small chalk," I heave a handful of dusty
fragments toward their raised palms
which glisten empty and black.

Celeste Duder



Hans W. Frei, Types of Christian Theology. George Hunsinger and William C. Placher, eds., New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992.

Hans Frei, for many years professor at Yale University, was well known for his contributions to biblical hermeneutics in *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative* and *The Identity of Jesus Christ.* When he died in 1988 he left portions of an unfinished manuscript on modern christology. *Types of Christian Theology* is a collection of disparate lectures and drafts, including a grant proposal, which the editors, in consultation with a committee comprised of Yale colleagues, have spliced together to make it as organic as possible. On the face of it *Types* is a commentary on biblical and christological scholarship since Schleiermacher, but it is also a prescription for how Frei thought this scholarship should proceed. While historical-critical interpretation of scripture is important and indispensable, Frei obviously felt it was not sufficient for a theology rooted in the church.

Frei's five-fold typology is constructed around the ways that various theologies articulate the "grammar" or internal logic of first-order Christian statements, and second, how well these articulations succeed in adhering to normative Christian language. Frei's chief concern is to explicate the implications for biblical interpretation of each approach to theology.

Type One, exemplified by Immanuel Kant and Gordon Kaufman, approaches theology chiefly as a philosophical discipline that has priority over any religious or community-based criteria. The Bible, though it expresses a universal moral order, is not unique. The whole of the biblical story is allegorical, Christ is an archetype, and the church a temporal vehicle for universal religion. The biblical text is "interesting" but limited in authority over the community.

In Type Two theology is also seen as philosophical but the particularity of Christianity is taken seriously in such a way that external description and self-description merge. The Bible in this approach, epitomized by David Tracy and Paul Tillich, is a sacred text that symbolically mediates the holy and is found to be existentially meaningful. Jesus Christ is the most powerful symbol, but his historicity of facticity is dispensable.

Type Three sees theology not as a philosophical discipline but as second-order reflection on Christian expressions of faith. The Bible is the normative expression of pious religious self-consciousness "and indirectly the self-communication of the perfect God-consciousness before, within, and after Scripture"(p.65). History matters. Friedreich Schleiermacher, for example, believed that the gospels present the historical Jesus, not just a symbol or archetype. For Schleiermacher, because the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith intersect in the biblical text, academic and church-oriented theology belong together.

Type Four, typified by Karl Barth, sees Christianity as having its own distinctive language which cannot be reduced to or equated with other ways of speaking. For Barth "God" is the very subject matter of theology. Theology is not rooted in philosophical nor in any transcendental anthropology, nor is it subject to criteria outside itself—yet it is still a science. Barth's concern is not so much with the historical Jesus in the sense of the liberal quest for him; Barth's is a literary (or conceptual-analytical) rather than a historical or religious/symbolic existential one. The specific person Jesus Christ regulates all predicates used of him; these predicates cannot be established by principles external to the text. Philosophy plays a limited and subordinate role in theology.

Type Five sees theology as a language game: theology is total self-description within the community of faith. D. A. Phillips represents this

grammatical approach to religion. The point of grammar is to regulate how words can be used; theology is a grammar insofar as it regulates religious ideas. In this view religion is wholly *sui generis*; philosophy is not just subordinate to theology it is altogether external.

Frei's typology surely is not meant to be comprehensive; one can think of so many omissions and counterexamples. Frei himself was quite aware of the permeable borders among the types; he often discusses how the very theologians he is considering might fall into more than one category. Still, these fragments are a provocative assessment of how Christian truth claims might be made meaningful in a pluralistic society. His sympathies lie with Type Four, in which the biblical portraits of Jesus, and the literal sense of scripture, are allowed to determine the method of theology.

Catherine Mowry LaCugna

No Hiding Place: Empowerment and Recovery for our Troubled Communities. Cecil Williams. HarperSanFrancisco, 1992.

"For years I took over other people's problems and, in so doing, short-circuited their power and tried to play God." Reverend Williams recounts the dynamic forces rooted in the combination of God's grace and of the painful existence of San Francisco's community of color. As the African American minister for a small, wealthy, traditional White congregation, Williams' work moved from "playing God" to answering the call outside the church doors; a reality of chemical infestation of cocaine and heroin in the immediate environs of the "once" comfortable religious community.

Celebrities filled the pews during the early 1960's when Glide United Methodist's ministry and spiritual leadership began to shift from traditional services to "livelier" liturgies focused on gathering people for support of the civil rights movement. This shift evoked another view to minister outside traditional church programs, forcing the question of God's relevance. Rev. Williams' ministry and spiritual leadership began to encourage community outreach and direct participationwith those suffering from drug and alcohol abuse, family disorganization, and poverty. Inevitable and spirit-filled was the congregation's move from the pew to the public to become an empowering group of believers, to bring the "good news" of God's power to others. . . those who were disempowered by drug usage, family disorganization, racism, and poverty.

Through the rededication of the church's mission, a long, arduous commitment to develop community outreach programs has given Glide Church national recognition for its systematic recovery services. The onset of HIV-related diseases further challenged Glide's alcohol and drug programs, yet they answered the call to develop educational and support services to address the changing nature of human catastrophies. Personal and insightful vignettes from Rev. Williams, recovering persons, and church staff workers engage the reader to examine the meaning of "There's no hidin' place down here."

A great sense of hope overcomes the abyss of community pain gained by Glide's prescriptive measures for ministry.

Lou Jeanne Walton

Christ and Creation. Colin E. Gunton. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992.

Colin Gunton, of King's College, London, has produced in this small book a genuinely creative and integrative systematic theology. The book is a series of four lectures, the 1990 Didsbury Lectures of the British Isles Nazarene College in Manchester, England. Here is a theology which is both thoroughly informed by the tradition and able to draw out lines from the tradition in fresh and imaginative ways. By exploring the biblical and theological relationship between Christ and the creation, Gunton achieves a theological vision and expansiveness which highly recommends this book for all persons interested in contemporary, yet classical Christian theology.

In the first chapter, Gunton surveys the issue of Scriptural interpretation. He acknowledges the achievements of modern critical stud-

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❑ **Leanne VanDyk** is on the theology faculty at San Francisco Theological Seminary.

❑ **Paul Harvey** is a Lilly Fellow in the Lilly Fellows Program in Humanities and the Arts at VU. He teaches in the Department of History and in Christ College.

ies of the New Testament, their emphasis on diversity, contextuality, and the utterly human nature of the text. Yet, Gunton wishes to remind his readers that faith, too, plays a role in the interpretation of the Bible in its witness to Jesus Christ. He says, "To discern within the pages of the Bible in all its diversity, problems and richness the being and action of a single God is a matter of faith" (14).

Thus, Gunton finds good reason for locating main unifying themes in the New Testament portrayals of Jesus Christ. One of those unifying themes is the relation of Christ and creation. Such a relation includes the lordship of Christ over creation, the teaching that Christ is, by virtue of the Incarnation, part of creation. Finally, Christ is the goal and final destination ofcreation, a broad theme encompassing the present and the future.

In the second chapter, Gunton further examines the idea of Christ the Creature. In this chapter, Gunton's skill as an integrating and creative systematic theologian emerges. He takes the doctrines of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, the Atonement, the Resurrection, Ascension, and Incarnation, and weaves them together to form a complete and convincing picture of classically-oriented, yet comtemporary, Christology. Gunton's Christology demonstrates the lovely interplay of theological themes that occurs when a creative mind ponders a rich tradition.

For example, Gunton reflects on the meaning of the virgin birth. Here is a doctrine whose career has steadily plummeted in modern times, but Gunton rehablilitates its theological function and importance. He says, "In sum, then, we can say that the point of the doctrine of the virgin birth is not to 'prove' the divinity of Christ, but to link together divine initiative and true humanity. Jesus is within the world as human, and yet as new act of creation by God." Far from safeguarding only the divinity of Christ, the virgin birth also emphasizes and highlights the true humanity, the creatureliness, of Jesus Christ. It thoroughly represents the the intersection between divine initiative and true humanity.

In the remaining chapters of the book, Gunton turns his considerable skills to other standard theological themes, such as kenosis, divine action, and *imago Dei.* These themes are all related and connected to his overeaching perspective of Christ and creation.

This is a remarkable book. In such a short space, it manages to evoke numerous small theological epiphanies, to serve as a brief primer of main Christian doctrine, and convincingly to portray the Christian gospel as a message of ultimate significance. The final sentence of the book is its best summary: "Any treatment of Christ and creation . . . must end with the affirmation that the one through whom the universe came to be, the Word of power by whom it is upheld, is also the one by whom the last word will be said, as he hands over the kingdom to the Father, that God may be all in all" (127).

Leanne Van Dyk

Conjuring Culture: Biblical Formations of Black America. Theophus H. Smith. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Smith's work is not exactly theology, or history, or literary criticism, or philosophy, or exhortation, but contains something of all of these. In chapters which sometimes illuminate with a piercing light and sometimes obscure with unnecessarily heavy jargon, Smith sets out a new agenda for African-American religious studies.

The work comes in a series of short chapters which examine everything from Sojourner Truth's shamanic practice to the lyrics of the "secular spirituals"—otherwise known as the blues, and not usually noted for the religious content of their lyrics—to Ethiopianism and its current renascence in the form of Afrocentrism. Smith divides his work into three parts: ethnographic, theoretical, and theological perspectives, and structures his chapters in an approximate mimesis (a favorite word of the book) of the structure of the Bible.

Thus we begin with "Genesis," in which Smith shows how the idioms of black America transformed "the nature of the Genesis cosmogony, rendering it African American as well as Hebraic in character." By the end we are at the Apocalypse, which involves a discussion of the history of African American views of the end times and "the rise of black peoples in a third age," including Malcolm X's personal and theological transformations. In between Smith provides short discussions of an amazing variety of materials, including penetrating insights into the heroism and limitations of nineteenth century figures such as Sojourner Truth and Frederick Douglass and a fascinating look at the folklore of the conjure man as the purveyor of medicinal as well as toxic substances (imitating the long-lasting role of the trickster figure in African American folklore, dating from the trickster-god *Elegba* in West African mythology, who was both good and evil at various times).

The best part of the book, I believe, is the brilliant exposition of the role of Moses as the ultimate conjure man in African American religion,

one who served a function similar to that of "gods and ritual specialists in West African traditional religions" (36). Throughout, Smith contends that "a covert transmission of African spiritual principles or personalities lies hidden under the conventional Euro-Christian forms found in black religious traditions" (39).

Smith's work is, ultimately, a resurrection and updating of the thesis usually associated with Melville Herskovits, who in the 1940s argued that black culture derived more from Africa than from the culture of the slavemasters. Smith implicitly argues against a generation of scholars (including his own mentor Albert Raboteau, author of the classic 1979 work *Slave Religion*) who have written of the "death of the gods" of Africa in America because of the peculiar conditions of slavery in North America— the small plantations, the widely scattered nature of southern settlement, and the overwhelming influence of the majority white culture. Smith concedes these points but argues that African Americans conjured a new culture which made the necessary accommodations to the white Christian perspective but which incorporated the African "pharmacopeic worldview, in which the cosmos is constituted and reconstituted by healing and harming processes and practices" (105). The Bible, Smith argues, "has functioned as an alternative source of formulas and materials (metaphorical and metonymic) for African people(s) deprived of their indigenous means for 'curing,' revising, or revisioning culture" (105-6). Christian baptism, for example, became a ritual ormance by which new believers conjured freedom.

A short summary such as this cannot do justice to Smith's rich arguments. This book is best taken in short spurts, both because of the profoundly interesting discussion as well as the unfortunate opaqueness of some of its prose. At times, Smith's points are so clouded in the proliferating jargon of post-modern academia as to be incomprehensible of the general reader. This is unfortunate, for his study promises not only to move African American religious studies to a new stage but also to provide a kind of "healing book" of his own for a contemporary culture in which racial antagonism has again poisoned the body politic. We need a conjuror such as Smith to prescribe "materia medica" for our festering racial wounds. But when the conjuror speaks in language so far outside of his traditions, then his healing practices cannot achieve their full effect.

Paul Harvey

Notes on Poets:

Eugene Dubov teaches at Jerusalem College for Women. His poems and short stories have been publshed in periodicals in Russia, France, Canada, USA, Germany and Israel. His poem "On This Warm Midsummer Day" appeared in the October 1994 *Cresset.*

Celeste Duder spent two years with the Peace Corps in Chad. She currently lives in Austin, Texas. This is her second appearance in *The Cresset.*

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